

AARON BEAN  
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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
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June 20, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I write to express my grave concern with the excessive amount of time it takes for the Department of State to process passport applications. The application wait time currently exceeds upwards of 12-13 weeks, and there exists an application backlog of more than 3 million. These numbers are simply unacceptable. The ability for American citizens to obtain a passport in a timely manner should remain one of the department's top priorities, and the current policies of the department do not reflect this priority. Passports affect the personal and social aspects of millions of American citizens, and their lives should not be affected by the department's incompetency.

The Department of State has indicated that the greatest impact on passport application processing times has been the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as you know, President Biden officially ended the national public health emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic on May 11, 2023. Nevertheless, the Department of State carries on in a manner that is pragmatically insufficient to handle the demand for passports by the American people.

In my district alone, my office has been inundated with hundreds of passport requests since I took office in January of this year. Many of my constituents have submitted the necessary applications well in advance of their travels, and yet they are left in the dark. My office has worked diligently to assist these individuals. However, my staff has spent up to five hours on hold attempting to get simple answers for my constituents only to be told "I don't know" by the person taking their call. This is unacceptable, and this insufficiency has directly and negatively affected my constituents.

In fact, for the past several weeks my office has been told there is not a single available appointment across the entire United States. Considering this astonishing fact, it has gone from difficult to impossible to aid my constituents with obtaining a passport. This is, again, unacceptable. Summer is upon us, and millions of Americans are looking to travel across the globe and cannot do so without a passport. If corrective actions are not taken by the department, this problem will continue to worsen.

I respectfully request responses to the following questions within 30 days.

- What actions are the Department taking to reduce the current passport backlog and decrease the wait times for passports to be processed?
- Have all 26 regional passport agencies resumed the practice of allowing walk-ins at their facilities, which was permitted prior to the suspension of normal operations on March 18, 2020? If not, what is the plan and timeline to return this practice to pre-pandemic levels?
- Does the Department plan to reimburse individuals who paid for expedited service and did not receive it?
- What percentage of the State Departments workforce is currently working remote?

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter and I look forward to working with you to rectify this most urgent situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Aaron Bean". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Aaron Bean  
Member of Congress